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LETTER DATED 22 JANUARY 1997 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the oral briefings concerning the situation in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa which I gave to the Security Council during its informal consultations on 8 and 21 January 1997.

As I advised the Security Council on those occasions, I have come to the conclusion that the gravity and complexity of the situation in the region requires the earliest possible appointment of a resident Special Representative rather than further exploratory visits by a Special Envoy as had previously been contemplated. On the latter occasion, I also informed the Council of my decision, after consulting the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Mr. Salim A. Salim, and leaders of the countries concerned, to propose the appointment of a joint United Nations/OAU Special Representative.

Such an appointment will be in conformity with the request of the Security Council that the Secretary-General cooperate closely with OAU in addressing the problems of the Great Lakes region, including preparations for an international conference. I envisage that the Special Representative will report to both Secretaries-General and will take guidance from both of them. This, of course, presupposes close coordination between the two organizations at headquarters level and Mr. Salim and I are discussing how this can be strengthened. We are also discussing the administrative and financial modalities for this joint appointment.

The essential tasks of the Special Representative can be summarized as follows:

(a) To use his good offices to promote peaceful settlements of the various conflicts in the region, with special reference initially to the situations in eastern Zaire and Burundi;

(b) To prepare an international conference on peace, security and development in the region, as endorsed by the Security Council;

(c) To use his good offices to help preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Zaire and to help restore that country's national institutions, including through support for the electoral process.



In carrying out these tasks the Special Representative will work closely with the Governments in the region and other parties concerned and will cooperate with special envoys and other mediators appointed by international organizations and Member States in an endeavour to provide guidance and leadership to a properly coordinated international effort to address the region's problems.

In his United Nations capacity, the Special Representative will also direct other political activities of the United Nations system in the region and will provide guidance to, and ensure coordination of, all other United Nations activities, working at the regional level through the existing Regional Humanitarian Coordinator and at the country level through the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators.

The Special Representative will establish his office in Nairobi, but will travel frequently and extensively throughout the region. For this purpose, he will require adequate logistical support including, especially, an aircraft and communications equipment which will enable him to keep in touch with his office and with the leaders of the region during his travels. In due course, he will, with the agreement of the Governments concerned, establish sub-offices headed by senior officials in various capitals of the region, including Bujumbura, Kigali, Kinshasa and possibly others, depending on his assessment of the support he needs.

The official heading the sub-office in Kinshasa will have an important role to play in supporting the Special Representative's exercise of his good offices with regard to the situation in eastern Zaire, but he or she will also be responsible, under the overall guidance of the Special Representative, for directing the United Nations electoral activities in that country. The official heading the sub-office in Bujumbura will assume the functions discharged with great distinction since December 1995 by Mr. Marc Faguy (Canada), who has informed me of his wish to leave his post when his current contract expires at the end of February 1997.

The efforts of the Special Representative will succeed only if he, and the two Secretaries-General who will have appointed him, are assured of the full and continuing support of the members of the Security Council, collectively and individually. This support will need to be of various kinds. Perhaps the most important support will be political: maintenance of consensus in the Security Council on how the problems of the region should be tackled and the manifestation of that consensus through decisions and statements of the Council, accompanied by supportive initiatives by its members bilaterally.

There will be an equal need for material support. This will include support for the Special Representative's mission itself, both through the prompt payment of assessed contributions to its budget and through voluntary contributions in kind, especially in the fields of aviation and communications which I have already mentioned. It will also include continuing financial contributions to the international community's variegated activities in the humanitarian and economic and social fields, without which it will not be possible to restore lasting peace and security in the region. Particularly important in this context will be the provision of funds for rehabilitation and reconstruction in Rwanda, especially the resettlement of returning refugees; for

similar programmes in Burundi after peace has been restored there; for the relief and resettlement of the many refugees that remain in the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire; and for the support of the many Zaireans who have been displaced or otherwise affected by the events that have taken place since 1994.

The Secretary-General of OAU and I have agreed that Ambassador Mohammed Sahnoun (Algeria) would be an excellent candidate for the post of Special Representative. He has held a number of senior government positions, including that of Ambassador to the United States of America. In 1992, he served as a Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Somalia and had earlier served for several years as an Assistant Secretary-General of OAU. He has already advised me of his availability should the Security Council decide to authorize the appointment of a joint United Nations/OAU Special Representative for the Great Lakes region. I have already established that the choice of Ambassador Sahnoun for this post would be welcomed by the leaders in the region.

I accordingly seek the Security Council's agreement to this proposal. I shall submit as soon as possible outline estimates of the cost of the resources required to enable the Special Representative to perform the functions described in the present letter.

I should be grateful if you would bring these matters to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN
